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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2023
TAGS: PREL PTER KTFN TU IZ
SUBJECT: GOI RESPONSES TO STOPPING TRAVEL TO ANNUAL PKK
TERRORIST MEETING

REF: A. SECSTATE 36799
B. BAGHDAD 1198

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Ambassador raised ref a points to President Talabani on April 14 and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister on April 17 (ref b and septel), both of whom pleaded ignorance of the event but promised to look into it. President Talabani said it was possible to put pressure on the PKK, but not to control them. Ambassador responded that picking up anyone coming to attend an annual conference would be a good way to apply pressure. Political Military Minister-Counselor raised the same with National Security Advisor Mowafiq Rubaie, who also professed not to know about it. He did, however, write down the points and said he thought it would be important that something be done about this issue.

¶2. (S/NF) Regional Reconstruction Team Coordinator on April 14 spoke with KRG Minister of Interior Karim Sinjari regarding the possible travel of PKK members from Europe to northern Iraq to attend a PKK party congress sometime in April or May and the need to watch Erbil and Sulaimaniyah airports carefully (ref a). Sinjari stated that the KRG continues to monitor the airports and has, since the beginning of 2008, returned approximately 10 suspected PKK members to Europe, usually back to Germany or Sweden. Regional Coordinator told Sinjari that the USG was delivering a similar message in European capitals and in Baghdad. Referring to the travel through Erbil of a well-known PKK financier last summer, Riza Altun, Sinjari urged the USG to provide information on any travel to KRG authorities as soon as possible, "before they get here." He also said that the Europeans should do the same as such operatives usually travel with European passports and the "Europeans know who they are."

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